

# Face to Face

## Escape Route

*One character on stage ('Liz' in the script, but change to actor's name throughout), sitting at her office desk at work. She is just finishing a business phone call. Voice of 'Jesus' through loudspeakers, actor unseen. Aiming not to give the impression of 'a voice from heaven' or that Jesus is always in any particular part of the room, but that he is present, close by, within and intimately involved with Liz.*

*Liz (on the phone):* Thank you very much, sir. We will get your order in the post today. You should receive it by the end of the week. Goodbye. *(puts down phone and talks to herself):* Hmm. I'm going to have to be careful today. That girl Jane will be here in a minute, and she always gives me problems. I suppose she's nice enough, but why does she always have to show off about how much money she's got? If it isn't her husband's new car, it's the next exotic holiday they're planning or some expensive home improvements. She probably doesn't realise the effect it has on me, but sometimes I just get really envious and then start getting stroppy with her. *(Suddenly stops and realises that she can talk to the Lord about it)* Jesus, can't you help me with this?

*Jesus:* Yes, Liz, I can. What do you want me to do?

*Liz:* Well, can't you stop Jane coming into the office, make her go sick or something? That would get rid of the problem.

*Jesus:* But it wouldn't really solve anything, would it? As soon as she showed up again, you would find the same bitter feelings inside you again, wouldn't you?

*Liz:* Yes, that's true, Lord. I know I've had to admit to feeling bitter towards her before and I've brought it to you and confessed it. I feel sure that you have forgiven me for it, but it goes on happening. Isn't there anything you can do about it? Have I got to go on doing things wrong, get forgiven, and then go and do those same wrong things again? It's not just Jane. There are other things that I keep on doing, and I know they are wrong. You go on forgiving me again and again, and that's really great, but I would like to stop doing them.

*Jesus:* What you need, Liz, is to learn how to deal with temptation - that's what all this is about, isn't it?

*Liz:* I hadn't thought of it like that. So, when I start to feel bitter towards Jane, that's temptation coming?

*Jesus:* Certainly is! It's like a pull towards doing something wrong. Feeling that pull isn't sin, but giving in to it is. You know that already, don't you?

*Liz:* Yes, it was the same last week when I saw an expensive watch lying around in another office. A little voice seemed to say, "Go on, you could take that. No-one would ever know." But I didn't give in to it that time. Why am I better at resisting some temptations and not others?

*Jesus:* Are you sure that you really overcame the temptation, or were you just afraid of getting found out? It's not quite the same thing . . .

*Liz (a bit ashamed):* Mmm . . . suppose you could be right there, Lord. *(brightly)* So, now I need some lessons in how to be strong and resist Satan when he tempts me to do things wrong, don't I? How am I going to do that?

*Jesus:* You're going to need to learn from me, Liz. You'll have to go one step at a time. You will fail sometimes, and I will still be there to forgive you and put you back on your feet. But gradually you will find that you are learning to avoid giving in to Satan's 'pulls'.

*Liz:* When he tempted you in the wilderness, Lord, you always seemed to have the right bit of scripture to answer him. But I don't know my Bible that well, and I'm no good at remembering the right bits at the right time. *(Pauses. Then, with grim determination)* Right then, it's some real solid Bible study for me now. I think I'd better start with all the laws in the Old Testament - then at least I'll know what I'm supposed to do and not do. Once I've got them sorted out, I can stand firm when Satan tries to fool me. If he says something's OK, I'll know whether it's true or not, so I'll be able to avoid doing all the wrong things.

*Jesus:* Hold on a moment, Liz! All you'll do is give yourself more "dos and don'ts" - you've got a long enough list already. And let's face it, you can't keep up with the ones you've got, can you?

*Liz (protesting):* But you'll help me, won't you, Lord? If I remember to ask you for special strength when I'm faced with a really strong temptation - surely that will work?

*Jesus:* Liz, you don't need to be stronger, you need to be weaker.

*Liz:* Oh Lord, that's just silly! I'm doing pretty badly already; if I get any weaker, I'll just collapse in the face of every bit of temptation. Satan would have a field day with me! Surely you want me to stand firm against temptation, not give in to it!

*Jesus:* I didn't say you have to give in, just that you have to be weaker.

*Liz:* Now you're talking in riddles, Lord. What do you mean?

*Jesus:* OK, I'll explain. When you see temptation coming, what do you do at the moment?

Liz: Well, I suppose I just try very hard not to give in to it. It's a real effort sometimes.

Jesus: And quite often it doesn't work, does it? Or maybe it looks as though it has worked on the outside, but inside yourself you are still in a mess? Like with Jane? Maybe you manage to be nice to her on the outside, but you're still all churned up inside.

Liz: I should have known I couldn't fool you, Lord. Yes, that's exactly what happens, all too often. All the trying doesn't seem to change how I feel.

Jesus: If you were so weak that you couldn't resist, then you wouldn't try, would you?

Liz: I suppose not, but I'd want to. (*miserably*) I wish I could just run away and hide, instead.

Jesus: You don't need to run away, but you can certainly hide. That's my plan for you!

Liz: That sounds better - reckon I might manage that! Where can I hide?

Jesus: Hide in me, Liz. When I died on the cross, your old life died with me. That's the life that was being pushed around in Satan's system of things. That old life is dead and gone and now you have my new resurrection life in you.

Liz: That's what they told me about before, and I know it's true. And that's why I was baptised, too - to say with my actions that the old Liz is dead and that I am now born again into new life in you, Lord Jesus. But sometimes it feels as though the old life isn't very dead, like when I give in to temptation - but that's what we're talking about, anyway.

Jesus: That's right. I think you're beginning to see it, aren't you?

Liz (*tentatively*): I think what you're saying is that, when I see temptation coming, I can hide in you. When you died, my old life died with you, so Satan has no more rights on me! Is that it?

Jesus: Exactly! Do you understand now what I meant about needing to be weaker?

Liz: I think I'm beginning to. If I try to be strong, I am almost certain to fail, especially on the inside. But if I know that I am too weak to even try to resist, then I shan't try to resist by myself, but hide in you. Is that what Paul meant when he wrote "when I am weak, then I am strong"?

Jesus: That was certainly part of it. He had to go through some pretty tough times which showed him how weak he really was, but that's when he found that he could hide in me. Because he was relying on my victory instead of his own effort, he found that he came through as if he had been strong. But it was my strength, not his!

Liz: Thanks for showing me all this, Lord. I'd better get on with some work now, but I'm not dreading seeing Jane nearly as much as I was. By your grace, I'm going to stand in the fact that my old life is over; I died when you died on the cross all those years ago. Thank you for making it possible for me to hide in you without running away from real life!

Jesus: Just go on learning from me like this, Liz. You'll be excited to see how it all works out in practice. And don't forget - In the times when you fail and it doesn't work out, my forgiveness is still ready for you as soon as you confess it.

Liz: Thanks, Lord. (*Enter Jane*) Oh, here's Jane already - will it be all right this time? (*almost a whisper, as Jane comes over*) I'm hiding in you, Lord Jesus!

Jane: Hello, Liz. How are you? (*without waiting for an answer, and pushing a glossy holiday brochure under Liz's nose*) Look at this fantastic holiday that Fred and I have just booked - three weeks in this luxury hotel in the Bahamas - isn't it just beautiful? We've got one of the best bedrooms, and that's the view from the window!

Liz: Wow! That looks lovely, Jane! What a super place! (*to the Lord*) This isn't easy, Lord, but I'm still hiding! (*to Jane*) Where did you find this brochure? It looks like a really good company.

Jane (*now not quite so brash, and a little surprised that Liz is 'warmer' than usual*): Oh, Fred got it from one of his work mates. They've got a really wide range of resorts and prices - would you like to look at it later? We could have a coffee together after work, if you like.

Liz: Thanks, Jane. Yes, I'd like that. Maybe I could find a holiday for Jim and me. See you later. (*Jane moves away*) . . . and thank you, Lord - that was easier than I expected. I want to go on learning to hide in you.

**END**

Dave Taylor February 2003

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